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Coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system related to the following theme: the role of the United Nations in promoting development, particularly with respect to access to and transfer of knowledge and technology, especially information and communication technologies, inter alia, through partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector

Draft agreed conclusions submitted by the Vice-President of the Council, Mr. Francisco Seixas Da Costa (Portugal)

The role of the United Nations in promoting development, particularly with respect to access to and transfer of knowledge and technology, especially information and communication technologies, inter alia, through partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector

1. The Council considered the theme "The role of the United Nations in promoting development, particularly with respect to access to and transfer of knowledge and technology, especially information and communication technologies, inter alia, through partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector" at its coordination segment. The Council noted that the General Assembly will consider, in appropriate intergovernmental consultations,

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ways and means to enhance cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector, during its fifty-sixth session pursuant to General Assembly resolution 55/215 of 21 December 2000. In this context, the deliberations of the Council could be taken as an input to the forthcoming consultations of the General Assembly. The deliberations of the Council helped further advance the work started by its Ministerial Declaration of 2000. It examined the experience gained by the United Nations system in assisting Member States in harnessing the potential of knowledge and technology for promoting the development goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the International Development Targets as well as the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits. It identified ways to enhance the effectiveness of these activities, in particular through building partnership with the private sector and other stakeholders. In this context, the Council welcomed the potential and the importance of activities that are to be undertaken in the framework of the newly constituted Information and Communication Technologies Task Force.

2. The need for technology transfer and better access to knowledge arises from the fact that, while knowledge and technological development are amongst the critical determinants of economic growth and sustainable development, there is considerable concentration of knowledge, and the technologies deriving from it, in a limited number of countries. The majority of the world population still lives in poverty and many have not yet reaped the full benefits of the information and communication tchnologies (ICT) revolution. This reality exposes many countries, especially in the developing world, to technological dependence, monopolistic pricing of technology and knowledge products and services, and, in some cases, to the application of inappropriate technological solutions to their unique set of problems.

3. The transfer of technology should be suited to the particular needs of developing countries, and their development policies including for permanent, non-formal and distance education; training of educators; creation of local content; e-commerce; telemedicine; on-line administrative procedures; promotion of access to ICT; and creation of better work opportunities.

4. At the same time, there is a considerable body of knowledge in the public domain from which developing countries do not adequately benefit owing to various reasons, including the problem of accessibility. A deliberate effort needs to be pursued in order to improve effective access to and transfer of this knowledge to developing countries.

5. Technology is advancing at a very rapid pace. New advances in the fields of ICT, biotechnologies, material sciences, to mention a few, are further enhancing the already immense potential for dramatically advancing development through "leapfrogging" stages of technological development. However, the fact that this immense potential is not being adequately harnessed threatens to further marginalize the economies and peoples of the majority of developing countries. The urgent necessity to find effective and innovative ways to put this potential at the service of development for all should inform the work of the United Nations system in the area of transfer of technology and providing access to knowledge. ICT need to be considered in the broader context of a developing country's overall priorities and socio-economic structure. They can also contribute to the empowerment of women and to reducing gender inequalities. In this regard, best practices and lessons learned by countries and communities that have already implemented ICT programmes need to be drawn from and built upon. Developed countries should share with developing and transition economy countries their experience in promoting and establishing ICT sectors in their own economies so that mistakes are avoided and benefits maximized.

6. The Council welcomed the initiatives taken by the organizations of the United Nations system to strengthen the system's role in this regard and to build partnerships with other organizations doing work to promote development through access to and transfer of knowledge and technology. These initiatives have been concentrated in a number of areas, such as developing knowledge and technology transfer networks through the utilization of the new technologies, especially the Internet, providing technical assistance to developing countries, building the capacity of developing countries, and assisting them with the creation of a conducive policy environment for the absorption, adaptation and utilization of knowledge and technology.

7. The Council recognized that due to developments in information and communication technology and the changing economics of information, knowledge is now more readily available in principle than ever before in the history of the human race. However, there are numerous constraints to accessing knowledge, particularly faced by developing countries and countries with economy in transition. These constraints, which prevent public and private sectors, as well as citizens, scientists and research institutions, from accessing knowledge, can and should be overcome. In this context, ways and means to provide and improve effective access to and transfer of knowledge and technology to developing countries need to be

identified. The relevant policies and approaches must encompass addressing cost, technological and capacity constraints as well as the need for transparent legal and regulatory frameworks and international cooperation for transfer of knowledge and technology on concessional, preferential and favourable terms to the developing countries, as mutually agreed, taking into account the need to protect intellectual property rights and the special needs of developing countries. The United Nations role in this effort is pivotal, including inter alia, through partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including the private sector and relevant international organizations, particularly in assisting developing countries in maximizing the benefits they can secure from ICT. In this context, the Council welcomes the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society which is to be organized in two phases, the first in Geneva in 2003 and the second in Tunis in 2005.

8. International trade and foreign investment and international cooperation are among the main channels of knowledge and technology transfer to developing countries and countries with economies in transition. A new and emerging dimension to international trade is e-commerce and growth of integrated financial, production and supplier networks. Along with their potential to enhance developing country access to markets and finance, there is the obvious need to avoid these networks emerging as a new barrier to access for many developing countries because of lack of the necessary infrastructure to ensure connectivity as well as the required human and institutional capacity for effective participation in e-commerce and financial transactions.

9. Sustainable development on a global basis requires, inter alia, accelerated transfer of knowledge and technology, especially ICT, in particular from developed to developing countries. In order to bridge the "digital divide" and promote access to, and effective use of, ICT in developing countries, establishing transparent and consistent legal and regulatory frameworks as well as developing sound policies are also matters of significant importance. In order for the new possibilities to be realized by developing countries, there is an urgent need for action to overcome infrastructural bottlenecks in telecommunications, transport, logistics and customs operations. The Council calls upon the relevant organizations of the United Nations system to give high priority to providing assistance, including technical and financial, within existing mandates, to developing countries in their efforts to overcome these barriers and to establish a proper legal and regulatory framework that is transparent and consistent and which is a

prerequisite in facilitating the expansion of the ICT market in developing countries. The United Nations system should also take into account the specific needs of countries with economies in transition in these areas.

10. The Council welcomes the establishment of the ICT Task Force as a major recent practical step aimed at strengthening the United Nations system's role in bridging the digital divide. Effective and meaningful collaborative efforts are required to enhance the developmental impact of ICT. Such efforts should include transfer of technology, in particular to developing countries, on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed, especially technology related to knowledge-based sectors, the mobilization of resources from all sources, public and private, at the national and international levels, and promoting capacity-building. Under the ICT Task Force initiative, the United Nations will lend a truly global dimension to efforts to bridge the global digital divide, foster digital opportunity and thus firmly put ICT in the service of development for all. The stated objective of the Task Force is providing overall leadership to the United Nations role in helping to formulate strategies for the development of information and communication technologies and putting those technologies at the service of development and, on the basis of consultations with all stakeholders and Member States, forging a strategic partnership between the United Nations system, private industry and financing trusts and foundations, donors, programme countries and other relevant stakeholders. The Council stresses the need to ensure coherence and complementarity between the ICT Task Force and other ICT initiatives at the regional and global levels. The Council recognizes the importance of effective coordination within the United Nations system. The Council also stresses that the Task Force should build upon the expertise that already exists within the United Nations system, including, in particular, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and its work, and also requests the Secretary-General to bring the Commission on Science and Technology for Development into the system-wide coordination regarding information and communication technologies. The Council calls upon Member States, the organizations of the United Nations system within their mandates and other stakeholders to extend their full support to the Task Force, including through financial resources on the basis of voluntary contributions.

11. The Council notes that the establishment of the ICT Task Force resulted from the acknowledgement of the existence of a widening digital divide and the recognition of the need to narrow the gap between developed and developing countries. In order to overcome this gap,

effective and meaningful collaborative efforts are required involving governments, multilateral institutions, the donor community, the private sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to enhance the developmental impact of ICT.

12. The Council acknowledges that the private sector in the area of ICT plays an important role in and is an essential source of technological innovation that generates economic growth, employment and wealth creation. The private sector has the financial and technological wherewithal to make a positive contribution to ICT for development, inter alia, within the context of genuine partnerships. Market forces alone will not suffice to put ICT at the service of development.

13. The Council calls for the strengthening of the United Nations system's crucial catalytic role in promoting transfer of technology and access to knowledge to developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Building partnerships with other stakeholders, including the private sector, is one of the effective means in strengthening that role. To that end, the United Nations system is encouraged to continue and further their efforts to:

- Support national and regional efforts in integrating national programmes for putting ICT in the service of development into national and/or regional development strategies, as defined and implemented on the basis of national priorities and on the principle of national ownership of such strategies;
- Support national efforts for technological development, targeted towards strengthening national science and technology research and development capacities and to improving the absorptive capacity for technology transfer, integration and diffusion, through appropriately structured international assistance;
- Improve coordination, complementarity and mutual links among knowledge networks developed by individual organizations of the United Nations system, including its regional organizations;
- Support the recently established ICT Task Force as a framework and an approach within which the identification, assessment, transfer, adaptation and post-transfer follow-up of knowledge and ICT, can take place while ensuring coherence and complementarity between the ICT Task Force and other ICT initiatives;
- Ensure that the principles and approaches that govern these partnerships and arrangements should build on the firm foundation of the United Nations development

goals. Without imposing any rigidity in partnership agreements, agencies of the United Nations should continue to adhere to a common principled approach to partnership which includes the following principles: common purpose, transparency, bestowing no unfair advantages upon any entity which is in partnership with the United Nations, and not compromising the independence and neutrality of the United Nations system in general and the agency in particular;

- Assist, upon request, Governments of developing countries in establishing legal and institutional frameworks that will facilitate the successful acquisition, adaptation and utilization of technology, especially ICT;
- Strengthen programmes and projects for education, institutional capacity-building and human resources development for ICT through collaborative and joint programming and promoting partnerships among academic and research institutions of developing and developed countries as well as countries with economies in transition;
- Support national efforts to establish the necessary human and physical infrastructure for ICT;
- Assist developing countries and regional institutions of developing countries in building local, national and regional networks of partnerships suited to the demands of their particular circumstances and needs;
- Encourage partnership arrangements among chambers of commerce and other business and industry organizations in developed and developing countries in order to assist in spreading best practices, including training in technical skills and know-how, management practices and the use of new management tools, and institutional cooperation;
- Encourage the private sector towards accepting and implementing the principle of good corporate citizenship, that is, bringing social values and responsibilities to bear on a conduct and policy premised on profit incentives, in conformity with national laws and regulations;
- In cooperation with other partners, design special programmes for the least developed countries and Africa that will enhance their capacity to benefit from knowledge and technology transfer;

- Provide assistance to civil society institutions of developing countries, especially their small and medium-sized enterprises and non-governmental organizations, in order to enable them to participate fully in partnerships with the United Nations system and partners from the industrialized countries;
- Develop mechanisms and tools to monitor, measure and evaluate the effectiveness of knowledge and technology transfer partnerships in terms of their performance, especially in relation to achieving specific socio-economic goals and targets as defined by the partners.